



**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

**Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)**



A pastoral response to the Palestine *Kairos* document: “A Moment of Truth”
April 2010

Sisters and brothers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ,

Greetings in the name of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ! We write to you this Eastertide having remembered Christ’s passion and celebrated His resurrection. In these times, as ever, we are particularly mindful of those around the world who are suffering, especially victims of natural disaster and war. We pray for their comfort and the hope that you offer.

As our attention has been on Jerusalem, we find ourselves watching with cautious hope the possibility of the “proximity” negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leadership, brokered by the US. Previous peace talks in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict have had but limited success, but we cling to—and support—any effort that may result in a resolution addressing the loud cries for justice that we have heard.

The Palestinian Christian community, whose population is less than 2% of the overall population of the West Bank and Gaza, continues to experience the hardships of occupation. Palestinian Christian leadership have taken the bold step of declaring this a *kairos* moment, a designation not of chronological time, but of opportunity ripe for momentous action, and a moment that can be lost if the opportunity is not seized. A pioneering *Kairos* Document was written by black South African Christians in 1985. Other such documents have emerged from contexts in Central America (1988), Zimbabwe (1998) and India (2000). This past December, Palestinian Christians issued their call, “A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.”

“A Moment of Truth” is a powerful statement. In addition to describing the painful reality of more than 40 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian Christians are unequivocal in their belief “in a Good and Just God,” and that their “hope remains strong.” Their faith in God leads them to expect a better future. Palestinian Christians issue this “call to see the face of God in each one of [God’s] creatures.” It is a call “to reject fanaticism and extremism,” reminding us that “human beings were not made for hatred,” and that hatred and killing are not permitted. We fully concur with these expressions of non-violence.

Palestinian Christians see several signs of hope, including enduring Christian presence and ecumenical witness in the land called holy; ongoing interfaith dialogue; the perseverance of generations of Palestinians and the continuation of memory; and the determination to overcome resentment and to be prepared for reconciliation when justice has been restored.

These Palestinian Christians believe that members of the Church must demonstrate love to friends and enemies, and that they must also resist evils, including, in their case, the occupation of Palestinian lands. “A Moment of Truth” states that the Church’s mission is to pray, serve, and be prophetic, speaking for and accompanying the oppressed, proclaiming the “Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity.” Now more than ever, Palestinians say to the world “**Come and see.**”

We, too, believe in this role for the Church. Through General Assembly and General Synod, the Disciples and UCC have advocated for a just and fair resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Such a resolution would necessarily involve Israel’s secure existence, next to a free and secure Palestinian state. Now more than ever, we say “**fair and free**” is the only way to ensure peace and justice.

There is much you can do as churches and individuals to work toward a just and peaceful end to conflict, starting with the Palestinian Christian *Kairos* document. We suggest the following four commitments:

- ❖ Commit to read and study the “Message of Hope” with your fellow church members;
- ❖ Commit to learning more about the situation on the ground, and non-violent responses to it, by organizing a trip, something that can be accomplished with the advice and counsel of our Global Ministries offices;
- ❖ Commit to advocacy with the US government, the most influential outside party in the negotiations, beginning with participation in the Churches for Middle East Peace Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC, June 13-15, 2010;
- ❖ Commit to supporting denominational partners in Palestine, supporting the Palestinian economy, and avoiding products that are produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

More information on the “Message of Hope” and these actions steps is available on the Global Ministries Palestine *Kairos* page [<http://globalministries.org/mee/kairos>].

Palestinian Christians conclude their letter, “In the absence of hope, we cry out our cry of hope.... We believe in God, good and just [and that God’s goodness] will finally triumph.... We will see here ‘a new land’ and ‘a new human being,’ capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.” Now more than ever, we pray that this vision does indeed come about, with our commitment.

In Christ,

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